



Achieving Statewide Success in Nutrition Education and Outreach

*Network for a Healthy California
1997-2011*



Who We Are

Since 1997, the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* at the California Department of Public Health has created innovative partnerships that empower low-income Californians to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security with the goal of preventing obesity and other related chronic diseases. The *Network* has grown over the years to be the largest and most diverse nutrition and physical activity initiative in the country. The *Network's* approach is based on social marketing, which is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence voluntary behavior change for the benefit of individuals, groups, and society as a whole. In practice, the *Network* implements well-designed, integrated programs that reach low-income families as many times and in as many ways as possible to achieve positive outcomes.

What We Do

With support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the *Network* has worked with nearly 150 different public and non-profit agencies. This enabled California to qualify for federal reimbursements for nutrition education starting at \$2.8 million in 1997 and rising to nearly \$110 million in 2011. About 90 percent of these funds support community-based programs directly. The *Network* provides statewide leadership through:

- 85 local assistance contracts to qualifying school districts, local health departments, food banks, health centers, Indian tribal organizations, and other public and non-profit entities;
- 30 competitive grants for *Regional Networks*, non-profit organizations, and African American faith organizations;
- 12 grants to leadership and training organizations;
- Bilingual advertising and public relations that support community-based programs;
- 5 tailored fruit, vegetable, and physical activity campaigns and programs;
- Development and testing of educational resources;
- Training and technical assistance to contractors and unfunded partners that serve low-income families;
- Administrative and fiscal oversight; and
- Applied research, surveys, and evaluation.

Why Our Work is Important

Healthy eating and physical activity are the building blocks for healthy bodies. Greater consumption of fruits and vegetables and regular physical activity are associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, certain types of cancer and type 2 diabetes, as well as improved weight management.¹⁻³ These medical conditions and obesity cost the United States economy an estimated \$661 billion a year in direct costs, which largely include lost productivity and health care costs.⁴⁻⁸



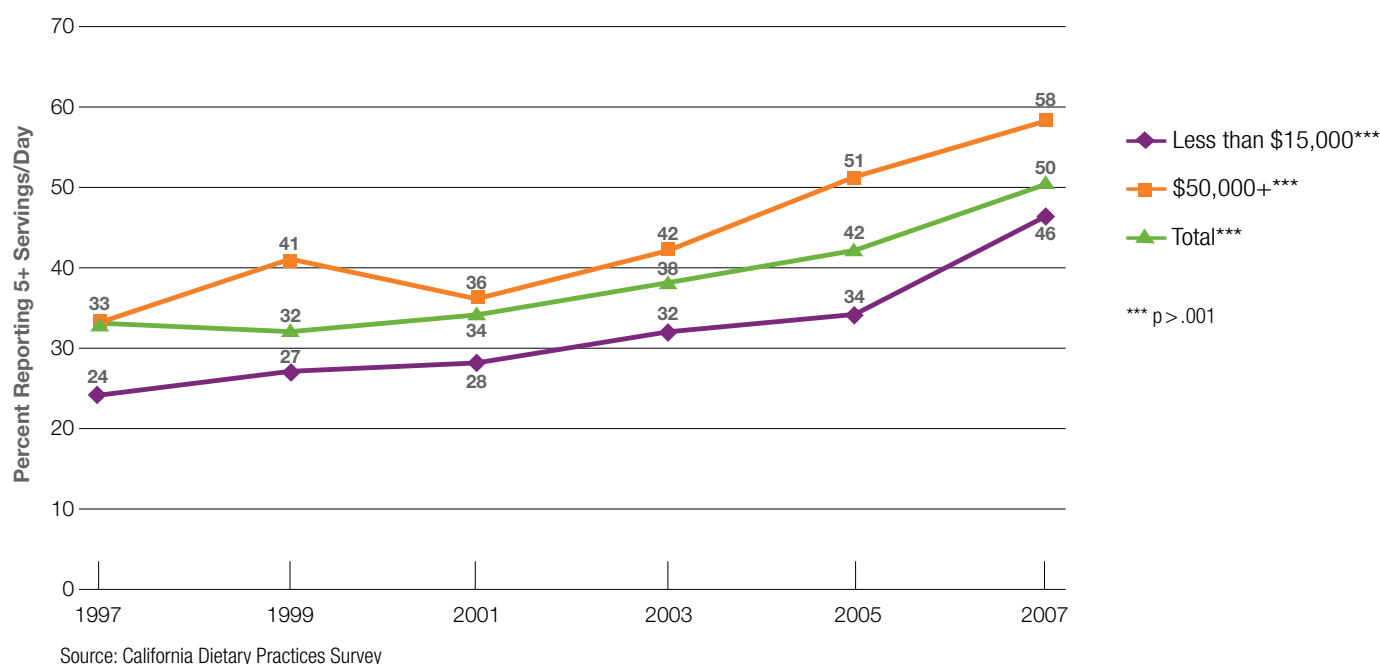
The Network Works

The *Network* conducts multiple statewide surveys and program evaluations to measure success. Three surveys are available to track population trends of the targeted behaviors, and multiple outcome evaluations are conducted to test the effectiveness of community programs. As the *Network* infrastructure evolved over time, low-income Californians enjoyed positive gains in fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and enrollment in SNAP.

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Has Increased

California surveys show that the percent of low-income adults who reached the minimum 5-serving goal for fruit and vegetable consumption rose from a baseline of 24 percent in 1997 to 46 percent in 2007. This is a 90 percent increase in 10 years.⁹ From 2000 to 2009, California's overall ranking for fruit and vegetable consumption rose from 11th to 5th among all states.¹⁰

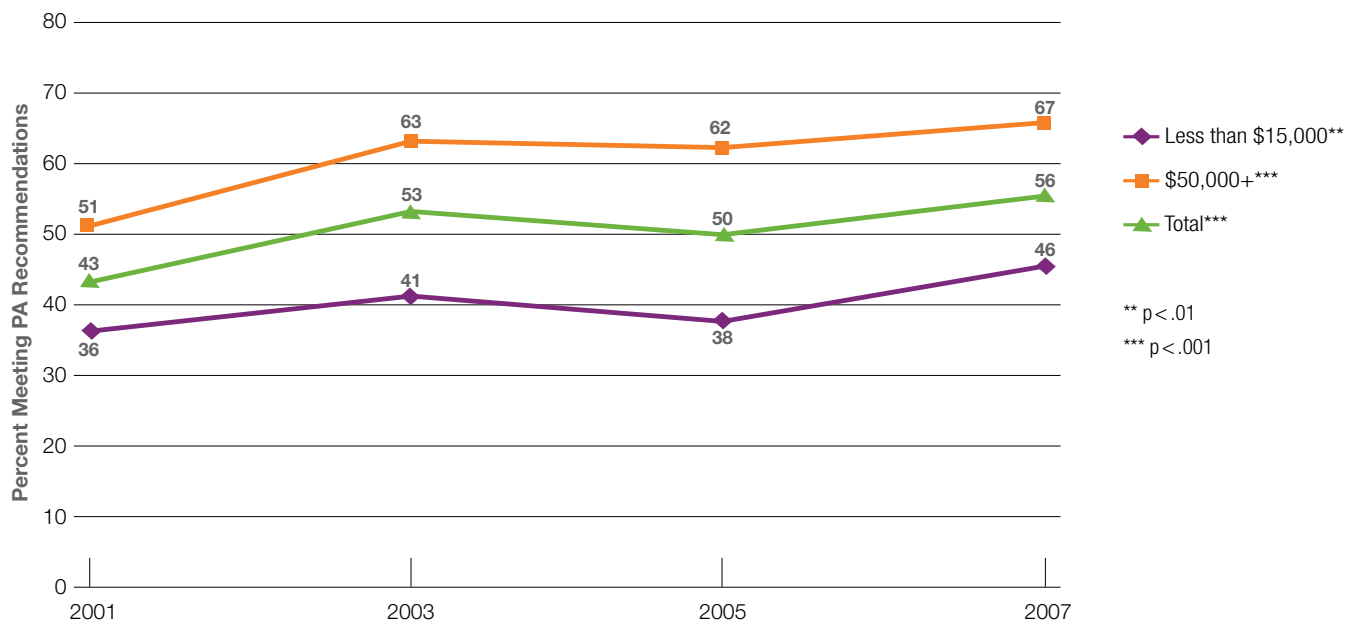
The Lowest Income Adults Increased Their Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Significantly as the Reach of the Network Grew, 1997–2007



Physical Activity Has Moved in a Positive Direction

California surveys show that the proportion of low-income adults meeting the recommended level of at least 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity grew from 36 percent in 2001 to 46 percent in 2007. This represents a significant increase of 28 percent.¹¹

The Lowest Income Adults Increased Their Physical Activity Significantly as the Reach of the Network Grew, 2001–2007



Source: California Dietary Practices Survey

More Californians Qualified for SNAP

In 2004, the *Network* worked with the California Department of Social Services to begin the Food Stamp Access Improvement Project, which by 2010 involved over 70 community-based organizations in 43 of California's 58 counties. In 2010, it is estimated that *Network* partners brought in an additional 28,400 households to SNAP.¹² This yielded \$4.1 million in federal reimbursements for outreach efforts, which resulted in nearly \$120.6 million in annual SNAP benefits for food and another \$215.9 million in economic stimulus to California communities.¹³

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Community Programs Report Success

Using 44 outcome evaluations from our local community contractors, we are able to conclude that overall fruit and vegetable consumption increased at a statistically significant level for adults, high school students, and children.¹⁴

- For adults, combined fruit and vegetable consumption increased 0.68 cups from pre-test to post-test. Adults in non-participating comparison groups reported a decrease of 0.26 cups over the same time period.
- High school-aged students reported eating fruits, vegetables, and juice 0.31 times more per day during the past 7 days at post-test than at pre-test.
- Children reported eating fruits and vegetables 0.28 to 0.50 times more per day during the previous day at post-test than at pre-test, depending on the survey instrument used as the measure.
- Both youth and high school students showed significant increases in knowledge, outcome expectations, perceived access to, and perceived parent consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Both youth and high school students also showed significant increases in days spent physically active for at least 60 minutes and time spent playing outdoors.

Tailored Campaigns and Programs Make a Positive Impact

The *Network* supports tailored campaigns and programs in selected communities throughout California to reach children, African American and Latino adults, businesses, and retailers.

- The *Network's Children's Power Play! Campaign (Power Play!)* reaches 4th- and 5th-graders as they begin to make food and physical activity choices independently of their parents. In 2009, *Power Play!* engaged more than 400,000 children in qualifying school and community locations. Initial evaluation of the *Power Play! Campaign* found a 7 percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption when implemented in schools and 14 percent when implemented in schools, community youth organizations, farmers' markets, supermarkets, and the media.¹⁵
- The *Network's Latino and African American Campaigns* reach their audiences through grocery stores, community organizations, health care providers, farmers'/flea markets, churches, festivals, and the media. In 2008, the *Campaigns* reached over 1.6 million low-income Latino adults and over 200,000 low-income African American Californians.



A large-scale evaluation study of the *Latino Campaign* reported a 37 percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, compared to Spanish speakers not exposed to the campaign.¹⁶ The findings also showed that the greater exposure to the *Latino Campaign*, the more fruit and vegetable consumption increased.

Low-income African American women were part of a study to demonstrate the effectiveness of the *Fruit, Vegetable, and Physical Activity Toolbox (Toolbox)*, a set of educational activities that is used throughout the *African American Campaign*. In this study, low-income African American women who took part in a series of six *Toolbox* community classes were significantly more likely than non-participating women to make changes to meet recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity, and they reported ordering more fruits and vegetables when eating out and eating more fruits and vegetables as snacks at work.¹⁷

- An estimated 2.7 million Californians with incomes low enough to qualify for SNAP have a household member who earns income.¹⁸ The *Network's Worksite Program* developed and currently provides the *California Fit Business Kit* to help employers support healthy eating and physical activity in the workplace. Two outcome evaluations showed the *Worksite Program's* success. One evaluation with catering trucks in low-wage settings found that

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85 percent of California's SNAP-Ed target audience is being reached by the *Network* advertising campaign multiple times each year through television, radio, outdoor, and transit outlets.

After two years of the Champions for Change Media Campaign, low-income moms reported making it easier for their children to eat fruits and vegetables every day and be physically active.

nutrition-oriented packaging and marketing of healthier entrees significantly increased sales of those items.¹⁹ Another study found that when employers provided fresh fruit snacks at work, low-wage workers reported purchasing significantly more fruit and eating more fruits and vegetables as compared to control worksites.²⁰

Mass Media Campaign Wins Awards and Changes Family Behavior

Winner of 28 high-profile awards from the National Health Planning Information Center, the American Advertising Federation, and others since 2003, the *Network* advertising campaign now reaches over 85 percent of California's SNAP-Ed target audience multiple times each year through television, radio, outdoor, and transit outlets. In 2010, our mass media efforts resulted in nearly 990 million gross media impressions among low-income households.

In 2007, the *Network* introduced its Champions for Change theme to empower low-income moms to make healthy changes. After two years, the annual media tracking survey of 2,000 SNAP recipients and other low-income mothers showed significant progress in key family behavior changes.²¹ Moms reported:

- making it easier for their children to eat fruits and vegetables every day (increased from 49 to 69 percent);

- setting limits on the amount of unhealthy foods they allowed their children to eat (increased from 53 to 82 percent);
- setting limits on daily television time (increased from 45 to 66 percent); and
- making it easier for their children to be physically active (increased from 53 to 68 percent).

The survey results also suggested that aided campaign recall increased from 47 to 60 percent between 2007 and 2009, and the recall was highest among low-income Latino and African American women.

Communities of Excellence Catalyze Neighborhood Changes

A community-based planning approach, known as *Communities of Excellence (CX³)*, was developed and implemented in 23 of California's 61 local health departments. They used the *Network's* geographic information system (www.cnngis.org) to map and then assess marketing cues, food quality, and access to healthy food in 82 low-income neighborhoods. Community members, including youth, were engaged by 80 percent of the local agencies.

The CX³ assessments resulted in efforts to:

- expand nutrition education in targeted areas such as retail food stores and food banks;
- improve neighborhood walking by making sidewalk and street modifications;
- start new school and community gardens; and
- institute healthy policies or ideas for vending machines, General Plans, and mobile vendors.

Additional CX³ results describing food environments in low-resource neighborhoods and surrounding low-resource schools have been reported elsewhere.²²⁻²³



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Regional Collaboratives Improve Food and Physical Activity Environments

California's large population, geographic size, and social diversity require a regional approach to help SNAP-Ed contractors and their partners maximize their impact. In the state's 11 largest media markets, *Regional Networks* run the targeted campaigns and programs, coordinate efforts among funded partners, and convene Regional Collaboratives that undertake cross-cutting nutrition education initiatives. More than 1,000 individuals and organizations, half of whom have no SNAP-Ed funding, participate in the Regional Collaboratives statewide. Selected outcomes associated with the Regional Collaboratives include:

- *ReThink Your Drink*, a campaign originating with the Alameda County Health Services Agency to reduce sugar-sweetened beverages, has been adopted by 9 of the 11 *Network* regions.
- Since 2005, unfunded Collaborative partners have worked to achieve:
 - almost 60 city, county, and school policy changes that include healthier standards for food and beverage items in vending machines;
 - over 40 new farmers' markets or farm stands accepting Electronic Benefits Transfer;
 - nearly 30 organizations adopting policies to provide healthier foods; and
 - changes in the built environment by 15 communities, including expanding bicycle lanes and adding language to General Plans that promote healthy eating and active living.





Looking to the Future

SNAP is USDA's largest nutrition assistance program. It serves over 42 million persons in the poorest American households and is designed to increase as economic need rises.²⁴ Half of all American children will have lived in households that used SNAP by the time they are 18, and half of all adults will have received food benefits through SNAP at some time in adulthood.²⁵ Since low-income groups have the highest rates of hunger, obesity, and diet-related chronic diseases, the benefit of using nutrition education effectively is huge.²⁶

The *Network* is well-positioned to continue to reach low-income families where they live, work, learn, play, and worship throughout California. At the national level, aggressive goals have been set for achieving the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, reversing obesity in a generation, and ending hunger by 2015.²⁷⁻²⁹ Expanding SNAP-Ed activities to include the evidence-informed policy, systems, and environmental change approaches recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other expert bodies could bring those goals much closer to reality.

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